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ACTION ARA-00

INFO OCT-00 COPY-01 ADS-00 INR-10 EUR-00 SS-00 OIC-02  
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LAB-04 PM-10 PA-01 OMB-01 SIL-01 USIE-00 SP-02  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3511  
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION  
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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date ☐ Declassify on ☐ Reason

[REDACTED] SECTION 01 OF 03 BUENOS AIRES 07614

CINCSO FOR INTAFF

CINCLANT ALSO FOR POLAD

ROME ALSO FOR EMBASSY VATICAN

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

PAGS: SHUM, PGOV, AR

SUBJECT: ARGENTINE REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS  
GIVEN PRESIDENT ALFONSIN

REFS: (A) BUENOS AIRES 5948 (DTG 301518Z JUL 84),

(B) BUENOS AIRES 7513 (DTG 191326Z SEP 84)

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SUMMARY: THE LONG-AWAITED REPORT OF THE  
RESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PERSONS

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WAS PRESENTED TO PRESIDENT ALFONSIN SEPTEMBER 20 IN A FORMAL CEREMONY IN GOVERNMENT HOUSE. A CROWD OF ABOUT 70,000 PEOPLE GATHERED IN FRONT, PEACEFULLY DEMONSTRATING THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE REPORT. THE REPORT STATES THAT "THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP PRODUCED THE GREATEST, MOST SAVAGE TRAGEDY IN OUR HISTORY," AND CONCLUDES THAT AT LEAST 8,961 PEOPLE WERE ABDUCTED AND KILLED BY MILITARY AND POLICE FORCES. ALFONSIN PRAISED THE COMMISSION WORK AND PROMISED TO SUBMIT ITS FINDINGS TO THE COURTS, WHICH WILL DECIDE IF THE REPORT CONTAINS SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE FOR TRIALS TO BE HELD. ALFONSIN WILL REPORTEDLY CREATE A SPECIAL, PERMANENT OFFICE IN THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TO REPLACE THE COMMISSION AND TO CONTINUE ITS WORK. ALTHOUGH NO NAMES WERE CONTAINED IN THE PRESS SUMMARY RELEASED BY THE COMMISSION, THE MILITARY WILL REMAIN UNEASY AT LEAST UNTIL THE SENSITIVE ISSUE OF WHO, IF ANYONE, WILL BE TRIED ON THE BASIS OF THE REPORT'S FINDINGS BECOMES CLEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) SABATO REPORT GIVEN TO ALFONSIN; NO MILITARY LISTED

ERNESTO SABATO, CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PERSONS, ON SEPTEMBER 20 PRESENTED PRESIDENT RAUL ALFONSIN WITH THE 350-PAGE SUMMARY OF THE COMMISSION'S FINDINGS AND MICROFICHE COPIES OF THE 50,000 PAGES OF TESTIMONY TAKEN FROM EX-DETAINEES, MILITARY AND SECURITY PERSONNEL, AND RELATIVES OF MISSING PERSONS. AFTER THE FORMAL CEREMONY AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WITH A CROWD IN FRONT OF ABOUT [REDACTED]  
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70,000 PEOPLE DEMONSTRATING THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE REPORT, THE COMMISSION ISSUED A 15-PAGE STATEMENT TO THE PRESS WHICH, CONTRARY TO EXPECTATIONS, DID NOT INCLUDE A LIST OF NAMES OF MILITARY AND SECURITY PERSONNEL ALLEGEDLY IMPLICATED IN KIDNAPPINGS AND TORTURE DURING THE SO-CALLED "DIRTY WAR" AGAINST SUBVERSION DURING THE MID-1970S.

1. (U) HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

AFTER POINTING OUT THAT IN ITALY TERRORISM WAS FOUGHT STRICTLY WITHIN THE LAW, THE REPORT STATED THAT THE

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ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES RESPONDED TO TERRORIST CRIMES  
WITH A TERRORISM THAT WAS INFINITELY WORSE, BECAUSE  
AFTER MARCH 24, 1976, THEY EXERCISED THE POWER AND  
IMPUNITY OF AN ABSOLUTE STATE, KIDNAPPING, TORTURING,  
AND MURDERING THOUSANDS OF HUMAN BEINGS. WE ARE  
CERTAIN THAT THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP PRODUCED THE  
GREATEST, MOST SAVAGE TRAGEDY IN OUR HISTORY."  
THE REPORT ALSO MADE THE FOLLOWING KEY POINTS:

1. AT LEAST 8,961 PEOPLE WERE ABDUCTED BY MILITARY  
AND POLICE FORCES, BUT THE COMMISSION HAS "REASONS TO  
SUSPECT A HIGHER NUMBER, BECAUSE MANY FAMILIES  
HESITATED IN DENOUNCING THE KIDNAPPINGS FOR FEAR OF  
REPRISALS, AND THEY STILL HESITATE, FOR FEAR OF A  
REAPPEARANCE OF THESE EVIL FORCES."

2. PERSONS ABDUCTED BY MEMBERS OF SECURITY FORCES,  
WHO DID NOT IDENTIFY THEMSELVES, "WERE TAKEN TO ONE  
OF THE "APPROXIMATELY 340 CLANDESTINE DETENTION  
CENTERS" WHERE CONDITIONS WERE "SUBHUMAN." THE

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4EMBASSY SANTIAGO  
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CINCSO FOR INTAFF

CINCLANT ALSO FOR POLAD

ROME ALSO FOR EMBASSY VATICAN

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, AR  
SUBJECT: ARGENTINE REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

CENTERS WERE COMMANDED BY HIGH-RANKING MILITARY AND  
POLICE OFFICERS.

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2. VARIOUS TORTURE METHODS, MANY OF THEM "UNKNOWN  
IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD," WERE APPLIED BY "SADISTS"  
AND MANY WITNESSES REPORTED THAT "CHILDREN AND OLD  
PEOPLE WERE TORTURED NEXT TO A RELATIVE IN ORDER TO  
FORCE THE LATTER TO GIVE INFORMATION."

3. "THERE WERE NO 'EXCESSES' . . . ATROCITIES WERE A  
COMMONPLACE, DAILY PRACTICE."

4. DETAINEES WERE OFTEN KILLED AND THEIR IDENTITY  
DISGUISED (CORPSES WERE OFTEN COMPLETELY DESTROYED)  
TO AVOID LATER IDENTIFICATION. MANY OF THE PEOPLE  
REPORTED KILLED IN ARMED CONFRONTATIONS WITH SECURITY  
FORCES WERE IN FACT MURDERED IN FAKED "ESCAPE ATTEMPTS."

5. IN CONTRAST TO THE FORMER (MILITARY) REGIME'S VERSION,  
THOUSANDS OF VICTIMS WERE NEVER INVOLVED IN TERRORIST  
ACTIVITIES AND SUFFERED "HORRENDOUS TORTURES FOR THEIR  
OPPOSITION TO THE DICTATORSHIP, FOR THEIR UNION OR  
STUDENT ACTIVITIES, FOR BEING RENOWNED INTELLECTUALS  
WHO QUESTIONED STATE TERRORISM, OR SIMPLY FOR BEING  
THE FRIENDS OR RELATIVES OF PEOPLE REGARDED AS  
SUBVERSIVE, OR FOR BEING (LISTED) IN THEIR ADDRESS  
BOOKS."

6. COMMISSION INVESTIGATIONS WERE HAMPERED BY THE  
DESTRUCTION OF RELEVANT INFORMATION PRIOR TO THE  
INAUGURATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITIES.

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1. THE FATE OF MISSING PERSONS CAN ONLY BE DISCOVERED BY SINGLING OUT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REPRESSIVE ACTIVITIES.

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1. (U) ALFONSIN'S REACTION

PRESIDENT ALFONSIN PRAISED THE COMMISSION MEMBERS AND PROMISED THAT THEIR FINDINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE COURTS. HE ADDED THAT "THERE WILL PROBABLY BE PEOPLE FROM BOTH SIDES WHO WILL RAISE THEIR VOICES TO CALL FOR SOME OTHER SORT OF ACTION, BUT I AM ABSOLUTELY CONVINCED THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF ARGENTINES FEEL THANKFUL FOR YOUR EFFORTS. . . I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THERE HAS BEEN ANOTHER PRESIDENT IN OUR HISTORY WHO HAS FACED SUCH A PAINFUL, DRAMATIC ISSUE WHILE ALSO BEING IMMERSSED IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ARE ADVERSE FROM EVERY POINT OF VIEW."

2. (U) OTHER REACTION

IT IS TOO EARLY TO EVALUATE FULLY PUBLIC REACTION AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS REPORT, WHICH WE WILL MONITOR AS IT DEVELOPS. DESPITE MINOR INCIDENTS, THE MASS DEMONSTRATION IN FRONT OF GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WHICH SOME PEOPLE FEARED WOULD BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR VIOLENCE TO ERUPT, WAS CONDUCTED PEACEFULLY, PARTLY BECAUSE ALFONSIN'S RADICAL PARTY PARTICIPATED AND HELPED CONTROL IT IN AN ATTEMPT TO KEEP IT NONVIOLENT. SURPRISINGLY, THE MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO, A LEADING HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION, BOYCOTTED THE DEMONSTRATION. IN EXPLANATION, PRESIDENT HEBE DE BONAFINI TOLD THE PRESS THAT HER ORGANIZATION "CANNOT BACK A RALLY IN SUPPORT OF A GOVERNMENT WHOSE INTERIOR MINISTER JUSTIFIED THE (MILITARY) REPRESSION"--(SHE WAS REFERRING TO MINISTER ANTONIO TROCCOLI'S PREFATORY REMARKS ON TELEVISION IN JULY BEFORE THE SHOWING OF THE PROGRAM NEVER AGAIN," WHICH WAS FILMED BY THE COMMISSION).

3. (U) PRESS PLAY

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CINCSO FOR INTAFF

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1.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, AR  
SUBJECT: ARGENTINE REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

THE REPORT WAS FRONT-PAGE NEWS IN ALL SEPTEMBER 21 NEWS-  
PAPERS. ONLY THE SMALL CIRCULATION ENGLISH-LANGUAGE

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"HERALD", HOWEVER, HAD AN EDITORIAL. IT NOTED THE "UNUSUAL EXPLICITNESS (OF THE REPORT) HAS OBVIOUSLY WORRIED THE ARMED FORCES, AND SOME MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT AS WELL, BECAUSE IT MEANS THAT SOONER OR LATER LEGAL ACTION WILL HAVE TO BE TAKEN AGAINST THE INDIVIDUAL (RESPONSIBLE) UNLESS, OF COURSE, THEY ARE GRANTED AN AMNESTY FIRST. . .THE ARMED FORCES THEMSELVES HAVE NOT COOPERATED IN THE SLIGHTEST. MILITARY PERSONNEL HAVE SYSTEMATICALLY COVERED UP FOR ONE ANOTHER IN WHAT AMOUNTS TO A VAST CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE AND HAVE DEFIED THEIR ACCUSERS TO COME UP WITH ENOUGH PROOF TO CONDEMN ANYONE AT ALL. . . (THIS HAS) PUT A DEGENERATE VERSION OF ESPRIT DE CORPS ABOVE ALL THE MANY OTHER VALUES THAT GIVE MEANING TO THEIR CALLING."

7. [REDACTED] WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

SABATO TOLD EMBOFFS IN JULY (REFERENCE A) THAT THE COMMISSION HAD COMPILED ENOUGH INFORMATION FOR THE COURTS TO TRY AND, HE HOPES, TO CONVICT "ABOUT 100" PEOPLE, BEGINNING WITH THE LEADERS OF THE MILITARY JUNTAS THAT RULED ARGENTINA FROM 1976-1983. HE ALSO SAID THAT IF ALFONSIN AGREED, THE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT WOULD BE PUBLISHED AND COPIES WOULD BE GIVEN TO THE LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL BRANCHES AND WOULD GO ON SALE TO THE PUBLIC. RECENT PRESS REPORTS STATE THAT IF ALFONSIN AGREES TO THE PUBLIC SALE, IT WILL BE THE END OF OCTOBER AT THE EARLIEST BEFORE THE FIRST PRINTING CAN BE FINISHED. THE EMBASSY PLANS TO BUY COPIES FOR ARA/SC, HA/HR, AND INR/IAA. IF ANY MORE COPIES ARE DESIRED, PLEASE ADVISE.

3. (U) PERMANENT HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE TO BE SET UP?  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S HUMAN RIGHTS DIRECTOR, AMBASSADOR RORACIO RAVENNA, TOLD THE PRESS SEPTEMBER 19 THAT ALFONSIN WOULD SOON ANNOUNCE THE CREATION OF A PERMANENT UNDERSECRETARIAT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH WILL BE IN THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, TO REPLACE THE NATIONAL COMMISSION. RAVENNA SAID THE NEW OFFICE WOULD ACT AS A RECEPTION CENTER FOR NEW TESTIMONY ABOUT VIOLATIONS OF HUMANRIGHTS "BOTH IN THE PAST AND IN

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THE FUTURE, SHOULD THERE BE ANY."

9. COMMENT: RELEASE OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORT, THE ONGOING INVESTIGATION OF FORMER JUNTA MEMBERS, AND TRIALS THAT MIGHT RESULT FROM INFORMATION THE COMMISSION HAS TURNED OVER TO THE JUDICIAL BRANCH WILL ALL ENSURE THAT THIS ISSUE WILL NOT EASILY FADE AWAY. EARLIER REPORTS THAT A LIST NAMING MILITARY AND SECURITY PERSONNEL ALLEGEDLY IMPLICATED IN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WOULD BE PUBLISHED WITH THE REPORT CAUSED SERIOUS CONCERN IN THE ARMED FORCES. ALTHOUGH NAMES WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE ABBREVIATED REPORT, THE ARMED FORCES WILL REMAIN UNEASY BECAUSE SUCH A LIST COULD STILL BE LEAKED OR PUBLISHED AS PART OF THE SUMMARY REPORT IN OCTOBER. THE EXTENT OF THE REPORT'S POLITICAL IMPACT CANNOT BE FULLY MEASURED UNTIL THIS SENSITIVE ISSUE IS FURTHER CLARIFIED AND THE COURTS DECIDE HOW TO TREAT THE TESTIMONY AND ALLEGATIONS CONTAINED IN THE REPORT.  
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